

The book introduces the basics of the theories of language mentioned in the previous list and explores them thoroughly by means of objections to them and possible replies to these objections. The exploration is kept simple and is not marred with additional details. An elementary knowledge of logic and philosophy suffices for a reader to enjoy it. I believe that it is precisely these kinds of elementary books that will benefit scholars, because elementary presentations encourage genuinely fresh thinking, starting from nuts and bolts, revitalizing ideas thought to be dormant. For example, is verificationism as wrong as its reputation would have us believe? Just one among the many virtues of this book is its attempt to encourage its readers to independently reevaluate this issue. Lycan gives preference to original formulations of theories over commentaries and emphasizes the continuity of ideas rather than what individual philosophers have said on the matter. In the end, one is assured that there is much room for further, genuinely productive research in this fascinating field. [AHTI PIETARINEN, *University of Helsinki.*]

An introduction to English phonology.

By APRIL McMAHON. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. 148. ISBN 0-19-521891-4. \$19.95.

This slender volume devotes approximately three-fourths of its 148 pages to the phoneme. After a brief introductory chapter, allophonic variation and psychological reality are introduced in Ch. 2.

Ch. 3 lays out the articulatory phonetics of English consonants, and Ch. 4 builds on this by introducing a basic set of binary features as well as a simple rule formalism. This chapter also highlights topics such as major class features and natural classes. Ch. 5 touches on a few more advanced topics, including a discussion of the complementary distribution of /h/ and /ɱ/ as an example of phonetic dissimilarity and defective distribution. Neutralization is presented, as is the archiphoneme and some of its shortcomings.

The discussion of the phoneme moves with Ch. 7 into the domain of the vowel, following Ch. 6's presentation of the phonetics of vowels, which again relies on the familiar articulatory criteria. The discussion of vowel phonemes includes the introduction of selected facts about different dialects, beginning with Received Pronunciation and General American. These are eventually supplemented with Standard Scottish English and the 'extraterritorial' New Zealand English.

The presentation of the phoneme and related principles which dominate the first seven chapters of the book are tied together in Ch. 8 through a discussion of types of variation (systemic, realizational, and distributional).

The final two chapters briefly take up suprasegmental phonology, offering a standard view of syllable structure and related topics such as phonotactics, sonority sequencing, and onset maximization as well as some discussion of stress assignment.

The ten chapters each conclude with problems and suggested readings. Students will find discussion of the problems at the end of the book along with a bibliography and index.

This easily readable book is, then, for the most part a presentation of one of the most central concepts in the history of phonology, namely the phoneme, and it may be appropriate for students having their initial contact with the field.

Points for potential improvement include the basic definition of phonetics and phonology given in Ch. 1: The author writes that 'phonetics is universal, while phonology is language specific' (4). Even though this view is subsequently moderated, allowing phonologists an interest in the universal, too, it nonetheless misses the distinction between the physical and cognitive sides of speech production. The book includes at least two theoretical excursions which I doubt leave students much wiser. One, mentioned above, regards the archiphoneme. Given the target audience for the book, both the presentation and critique of this notion might just as well have been left aside. The other involves the page-long presentation and critique of optimality theory (OT). Without going into detail, it seems to me that failure to mention the central OT tenet of constraint violability will render incomprehensible any attempt to juxtapose 'important' constraints with constraints having 'no obvious effect'. Although brevity is clearly a goal for the book, no one can do OT—or any theory—in a page. So why try? [CURT RICE, *University of Tromsø.*]

Syntactic aspects of topic and comment.

By ANDRÉ MEINUNGER. (*Linguistics today* 38.) Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000. Pp. viii, 245. \$98.00.

This is a revision of Meinunger's dissertation, published in 1996 in the *Groninger Arbeiten zur germanistischen Linguistik* series (No. 39). Its goal is to investigate how the discourse structure of sentences (i.e. the division of information into 'old', known by the speaker and the hearer, topic, and 'new' comment) is encoded syntactically. The author uses the term 'syntactic' in its broader sense and discusses, besides syntactic, also morphological and phonological aspects of sentence organization. The main claim of the study is that the ordering of elements within a sentence is determined by the informational task.

M begins with an overview of existing theories about sentence discourse organization, such as